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Anti-Semitism, Misogyny and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao by Nancy A. Harrowitz

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worthy of worship—operates as a leitmotif binding these individual narratives. Taken collectively, the chapters trace the trajectory of the *Orlando Furioso* itself, which moves from "romance and deviation" (Angelica) to "epic and closure" (Bradamante) (19).

Although as warrior woman, Bradamante might seem the most disruptive of Ariosto's collection of female figures, Finucci identifies Angelica as his most formidable female. Narcissistically self-enclosed and self-contained, uninterested in suitors and equipped to thwart would-be ravishers such as Ruggiero, by becoming invisible, Angelica "desires nothing but escape from the desire that creates a place for her in representation" (118). But an Angelica who is "the subject of her own desire" (120) is outside the economy of the symbolic order. As such, she unmans--or castrates--men who control or possess her (as seen in Orlando's madness), and therefore must be radically degraded in the narrative. Bradamante, on the other hand, although ostensibly threatening by virtue of her fiercely male exterior, is never phallically empowered: Ariosto's narrative strategy with her is to show "at each opportunity that she is only pretending to be a man" (243).

Finucci's examination of both the *Cortigiano* and *Orlando furioso* is extraordinarily rewarding because of the polished way in which she integrates theoretical premises with richly detailed textual exegesis. It is true that occasionally her insistence on narrative strategies of recuperation flattens out contradictions suggested by her own evidence. For example, Bradamante, the "unimpeachable female subject" whose military phase ... constitutes only a temporary activity before her public espousal of the joys of domesticity" seems incompatible with the Bradamante who understands that Rodomonte's mausoleum for Isabella "should not replace a woman, dead or alive, but should represent a woman's right to choose a life of her own" (194). Such a contradiction suggests a destablizing crux which might work to contravene or at least compromise a recuperative narrative strategy. But if Finucci chooses not to foreground such cruxes in her analysis, it is because her main objective--an ambitious one--is to dismantle an entrenched critical tradition which mistakenly attributes protofeminist attitudes to Castiglione and Ariosto. In terms of this task, she is unquestionably successful. Thus her book represents a keystone study which will prompt an important shift in critical approaches to major writers of the Italian Renaissance. Especially as a first book, it is a remarkable accomplishment.

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Anti-Semitism, Misogyny and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao

By Nancy A. Harrowitz.
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This study is primarily concerned with the connection between misogyny and anti-Semitism in late nineteenth-century Italy, and specifically the place and identity of women and Jews in society. Harrowitz's intention, as implied in her title, is not only to provide a close reading of the authors in question, but to determine to what degree these prejudices are reinforced or even generated by nineteenth-century science, particularly Darwinism. She singles out Lombroso and Serao because both depend on the science of their day to theorize the status of disenfranchised groups, and both reveal problematic relationships to their selfhood (13). Harrowitz has made an impressive effort to draw parallels between science and literature and to show how prejudice towards different groups can intersect. Harrowitz has delineated where points of comparison might be drawn, and she has found some common ground for her choices, if not convincing theoretical justification.

She organizes her study into seven chapters, three of which are centered around discussions of misogyny and anti-Semitism in Lombroso. While she relays nothing new on the subject of Lombroso's misogyny, amply documented in scores of studies, the discourse on anti-Semitism provides an important step in opening up new fields of inquiry. It is this alleged newness of the field that sets much of the tone for her analysis. The last section of chapter three is focused on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as Count Dracula is compared to a Lombrosian criminal. Although this is a subject that has already been treated elsewhere, Harrowitz utilizes it to draw attention to the fact that the underlying stereotype is often that of the East European Jew. Unfortunately, the reader is left thirsting for more information.

Chapter four, "Portraits of Self-Abnegation", is one of the most interesting. In this chapter, Harrowitz addresses the concept of self-hatred by comparing Lombroso's Jewish identity with Otto Weininger and Franz Boas. Here she examines some of the limited bibliography on Jewish self-hatred, including the questions of definition. Harrowitz is not alone in arguing that other factors, such as complicity with antisemitic policies and acts of anti-Semitism, must be taken into account before one can conclude that Lombroso hated himself for being a Jew, and prefers the terms "self-denial" or "self-abnegation". Equally insightful is her analysis of the warm reception of Weininger in Italy, especially by Florentine intellectuals who were markedly silent on his anti-Semitism.

In the following two chapters she explores the work of Matilde Serao. While the first presents an overview of Serao's work, studying her newspaper editorials together with her novels, the second examines the novel *La mano tagliata.* Both chapters focus on the ambiguous and often contradictory aspects that characterize Serao's writing. Like Lombroso, Harrowitz contends, Serao challenges the status of her own group while distancing herself from her own identity. Although Serao built a brilliant career for herself, in her newspaper editorials she advised women to stay at home. In her novels she demon-

strated ambivalence and hostility towards women's subaltern status. Harrowitz does well to point out that a glaring exception to her conservatism is her anti-Fascist stance which clearly cost her the Nobel Prize in literature. Harrowitz spends a considerable amount of time, and to good effect, studying her three 'love' novels, *Cuore infermo, Addio amore!* and *Castigo*.

In the second chapter on Serao, Harrowitz studies how Serao's view of women as marginalized interacts with the more fully marginalized and scapegoated figure of the Jew in some of her fiction. After an astute analysis of *La mano tagliata* in terms of race, religion and gender, Harrowitz concludes that, for Serao, a critique of patriarchy is possible only through the figure of the Jew.

One of Harrowitz's intentions is the rehabilitation of Serao as a worthy subject of critical analysis. She attributes Serao's marginalization to her "pluralistic literary production" and "critical prejudice" (82). In doing so, Harrowitz lends her voice to the current debate as to whether or not Serao can be considered a feminist. Harrowitz opts for exploring the "feminist tensions" in Serao, yet Harrowitz herself can be accused of pushing Serao along the spectrum from ambivalent misogynist to quasi feminist too fast. Her analysis, however, raises an important question: What are the criteria for judging texts "feminist"? It is clear that salvaging a multi-faceted Serao is nevertheless a way of rescuing women's voices.

Yet Harrowitz, though she is certainly not alone, falls into the very essentialism she is trying to avoid when she applies Barbara Johnson's "power of feminine contradiction" to Serao as a solution to the problem of female authority in the text: "Contradiction is at once a vehicle for this authority and at the same time an analysis of the source of its power; this dual characteristic sums up very well the situation in which we find Serao" (100). While it is true that rereading Serao in terms of inconsistency or tension rather than strict categorization can be useful, it is less clear how bound up these terms are or where they may lead: why, for example, are these categories not applied to writing by men (can "male contradiction" exist?)

This study of Serao might have been improved if the author had paid closer attention to the critical reception of Serao during her time, rather than exclusively providing close readings. In addition, Harrowitz, surprisingly, fails to draw upon recent critical studies to strengthen her claims. Regarding women's marginalization, her study would have benefitted greatly by rereading Serao in relation to other Italian women writers of the time, like Negri and Deledda, who also addressed the marginalization and contradiction in their lives as literary women, as Robin Pickering-Iazzi notes in *Unspeakable Women: Selected Short Stories Written by Italian Women during Fascism.*

There is a final chapter devoted to "Gender & the Stigma of Difference," a study of the history of the word "stigmata" in order to illuminate the logic of cultural difference in the late nineteenth-century. By doing so, Harrowitz attempts to tie up the

issues of Judaism and gender raised in the works of Lombroso and Serao, though is never completely successful.

The discourses raised by both Lombroso and Serao which address crucial concerns of the late nineteenth-century, such as the place and identity of women and Jews in society and the role of science to mediate pressing social issues, have a contemporary relevance. Moreover, Harrowitz's work is an important addition to the increasing number of studies which trace a current of anti-Semitism in Italian culture. By underlining the relationship between beliefs about people and practices marked as different, as well as the logic of the erasure of difference, Harrowitz's study rings with a contemporary relevance as we confront recent recycled racist and misogynist discourses culminating in *The Bell Curve.*

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The New Italian Novel

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What best characterizes the possibilities of fiction today in Italy is the coming into being of a narrative community distinct from the groups of literary intellectuals for whom in the post-war period the novel was essentially a vehicle for social reform or, at least, a discrete occasion for reflecting on some aspect of alienated human existence. Italian literary culture once enjoyed relative autonomy; it existed in a space roped off from society and designated as a refuge from commercialization and ideological violence. Then one could read the history of modern Italy in novels that not only spoke to the development of civic consciousness but also programmed the mind of the reader to a totalizing logic. Each fiction answered in some way all the questions that could be asked about life. Writing was indeed a serious matter, the only truly 'serious" and "authentic" activity in a world devoted to material progress. The task of writing novels was nothing less than to represent society to itself.

It is hard to pinpoint when the novel in Italy ceased being a vehicle of ideological commitment. Nor is it certain that all current writing is in fact post-ideological. Vassalli, Consolo and Pazzi are names that immediately come to mind as proof that commitment (whether on the left or the right) is not a thing of the past. But what these authors lack with respect to such writers as Vittorini, Pasolini or Volponi is a sense of the contradiction between culture and the secular market system. They share no common purpose in this regard, no rational project designed to counter the absence and privation they experience in life. In their world, "culture" has passed completely over to the other side to become a part of society's business.

Another way of looking at this change in context is to view the cultural field as having undergone such